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AUTHOR   Abrahamsson, Kenneth
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ABSTRACT
              A project was undertaken in 1970-76 whose principal
purpose was to study the prospects of two-way communication between
an administrative authority (the office of the chancellor of the
Swedish universities) and the general public (prospective students in
the national plan for wider admissions). It grew out of criticism of
a proposed national information system. The background,
development, and problems of the experiment are examined. (MSE)

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tempts to describe the information and contact activities
of higher education, together with minor analyses of needs,
but the major field experiment in two-way communication
never materialized. Instead a number of minor contact ex-
periments were carried out in the course of the project,
namely 1) an experiment involving discussion groups on edu-
cation and information needs at work (altogether some 100
persons distributed between four personnel groups: admin-
istrators, supervisory personnel, "home samaritans" and
construction workers), 2) an experimental scheme of study
circles on educational and vocational counseling for adult
students (about 100 persons altogether), 3) an experiment
in the distribution of education brochures via advertise-
ments, and 4) a follow-up of two vocational courses.

Guided by the experience and results accruing from the var-
ious field experiments, the third phase of the project
placed considerable emphasis on conceptual analysis, the
aim being to develop a model for the analysis of informa-
tion and counseling needs during adulthood as an aspect of
the role change implied by the transition to studies.

General problems of information and contact activities

During the first year of the project, information and con-
tact activities were described at various levels of uni-
versity organization, i.e. at UKÄ level, at administrative
level and at institutional level (report 7). In common with
other forms of public activity, Swedish universities and
colleges have constructed a special organization at local
and central levels to deal with information questions.

One of the purposes of this survey was to see whether in-
formation and contact activities presented any clear filter
effects. In the manifold pattern of internal and external
channels of communication in the university system, we
found on repeated occasions that questions concerning the
effect and function of information were experienced as a
problem by many people. At central level mention was made
of the difficulty of ascertaining the effect of information
efforts. The information secretaries at administrative lev-
el felt that there was a distinct lack of interest in the
information already available. The study of institutional
channels of communication revealed passive information
routes which required a great deal of spontaneous activity
on the part of the student. A follow-up of UKÄ brochures
(report 1) also indicated that the solution of the physical
dissemination was not enough. Roughly half the recipients
of brochures distributed by post were unable at the time
of the follow-up to recall ever having seen a brochure.

Our observations concerning the pattern of information and
contact activities led us to conclude that they were distin-
guished by a special communication strategy, namely the
principle of public availability, whereby it is up to the
individual to take the initiative and obtain information
from the local supplier of information or from some other
source. This principle does not only mean that information

must be physically searched for but that it must be
searched for mentally as well.

This finding is rather trivial, but at the same time
it has a vital bearing on the activities concerned.
The communication process does not function unless
the individual himself is disposed to search actively
for information, to assimilate it and to apply it to
his own situation, his own decisions and experience,
his own deliberations etc. Different efforts to in-
crease the availability of civic information (e.g. the
organisation proposed by the Swedish Committee on
Civic Information) will always operate as a principle
of public availability if the individual is not dis-
posed to assimilate the information. Consequently un-
anticipated information is not discovered and used
but instead becomes what the communications theorists
term noise.

Some experiments in two-way contact

A number of contact experiments were carried out in
order to obtain a clearer picture of the prospects
and conditions of two-way contact between universities
and presumptive adult students. Two of these experi-
ments were principally based on written information
while the other two were a combination of written and
spoken information. In the first experiment an auto-
diagnostic needs questionnaire was tried out and proved
capable in certain circumstances of serving a useful
purpose in inducing presumptive students to articulate
their information and counseling requirements more
clearly. Similarly we were able to show that our second
experiment, a procedure for requisitioning information
on higher education, catered for important information
requirements, not least considering that the majority
of the people concerned had not previously received
the brochures they requisitioned.

The group experiments served to demonstrate that the
social context and the real content of the message are
crucial to the development potential of the forms of
contact. In the third experiment, involving group edu-
cational and vocational counseling for adult students
(report 2), the participants were very much disposed
to seek answers to specific questions, preferably from
an expert in the guise of a vocational counsellor.
Most of the participants in the experiment had voca-
tional motives for their educational interest. The re-
sult of the experimental personnel training day (report
4) clearly testified to the powerful influence of the
social role on the physical and environmental condi-
tions attaching to contact and discussion, e.g. the lo-
cation of the place of employment, the nature of work,
the availability of assembly rooms and other communal
facilities. At the same time it is important to note
that these environmental conditions are only the frame-
work within which the social and psychological factors

operate. The results of this experiment do not justify
exaggerated hopes of colleagues at work as the sponta-
neous vehicles of educational information. The distri-
bution of the message, second and third-hand contacts
etc. depend to a great extent on a series of factors,
many of which are related to the social pattern within
which different people act.

Information and counseling needs as an
aspect of role change

One of the important points of departure in studying
the interaction between the social situation and the
ideas of the individual concerning education is of course
the question of what the individual himself wishes to do
about his situation. On the basis of about 25 interviews
of presumptive adult learners at university level, we
have tried to analyse the ideas and expectations that
are obtained concerning university studies and the extent
to which these presumptive students regard education as
a means of changing their social situation (reports 5, 7
and 8). Different people can have radically different
ideas concerning higher education as an instrument of
this kind of change. Some of the interviewees aim at a
vertical role change. They regard university education
as an aid to the acquisition of another occupation, an-
other social position or of a social role which is dif-
ferent in some other respect. Another function of edu-
cation is connected with personal growth and development
in an existing role. Another example could be termed role
confirmation; education is sought as a means of living up
to the expectations of others or as a safeguard against
"coming down" on the social scale, e.g. vocationally.
The motives of some of the interviewees could be de-
scribed in terms of horizontal role change, i.e. rather
than wishing to transform their present situation to any
great extent they are intent of deepening and developing
their interests and needs in their present roles.

Not unexpectedly, the interviews showed that the tendency
for education to be used as an instrument of change or as
a stabilizer of the social situation depended on belief
in its ability to perform such a function. The inter-
viewees who do not see education leading to any imminent
change do not put a great deal of effort into their stud-
ies and, therefore, are not in any acute need of informa-
tion. Other people, regarding education as a direct instru-
ment of change, experience greater direct needs of infor-
mation. Attitudes to educational information are therefore
related in concrete terms to the function attributed to
education and the expectations which are entertained con-
cerning it. Mention should be made of the following as
being some of the factors in the social situation which
influence ideas concerning education and information about
education.

Position in the process of educational and vocational decision

People planning to embark on university studies but not for another two, three or four years have completely different information and counseling needs from people intending to start the very next term. A strikingly large number of the people interviewed were in this position, which can be termed a preparatory situation of choice. Simplifying matters somewhat, information and counseling needs can be described as a desire for more or less distinct signposts at different stages or crossroads in the individual person's process of educational and vocational decision, e.g. 1) the initial stage, 2) the recruitment stage and 3) the introductory stage.

Information and counseling needs are dependent on motives for studying

The people who regard education as directly related to their vocational role have different information and counseling requirements from people who put interest in learning as such in the forefront. Ideas concerning one's future vocational role can often be more important that the clarity of a person's ideas concerning the nature of university studies.

Interest in information is affected by social limitations

The interviews also convey a clear picture of the great influence exerted on educational attitudes by the social situation of the presumptive students in terms of social contacts. The social situation of the adult student can often involve geographical, temporal, spatial and interpersonal restrictions. These in turn affect his predisposition towards educational information.

Information and counseling needs are dependent on the decision-making situation

The interviews showed that information and counseling needs could vary a great deal, depending on the way in which the individual formulates his problems of educational choice. Persons who have decided what direction they are going to take have completely different needs from persons who are contemplating various alternatives or who feel generally uncertain. The former group require two-way information of a more technical/administrative nature, while the latter group are more interested in being able to talk their problems over with somebody.

Clarification, preparation and dialogue
as counseling criteria

Against this background it is obvious that a great deal
of the role transformation undergone by the individual
- from employment to higher studies, for example - de-
mands not only information but also abundant opportuni-
ties of guidance, discussion and the penetration of
problems of educational and vocational choice. This
applies both to young students who have recently com-
pleted their secondary schooling and to older students
who have acquired job experience and social commitments
to jobs and families. In the final report from the
project (report 8), these problems are discussed with
reference to three counseling criteria.

A. Levels of clarification

  1) Increase of available information concerning
     relevant educational and occupational alterna-
     tives

  2) Exploration by the student of his own premises
     in making his education and occupational choice

  3) The design of decision-making structures in the
     student's own choice

  4) The penetration of premises in the form of
     psychological commitments to various alternatives

  5) The support of initiatives conducive to role
     change

  6) The support of the ego development and self-reli-
     ance of the individual and of his search for iden-
     tity.

B. Levels of preparation

  1) Creation of the self-reliance needed for initia-
     tives towards change

  2) Simplification of role change by means of role
     planning, i.e. "negotiation" with the occupiers
     of complementary roles

  3) Improvement of the individual learning strategy,
     partly by devoting profounder attention to ques-
     tions of content

  4) Supplementation of prior knowledge required for
     potential educational alternatives.

C. Feedback levels (two-way contacts)

  1) Feedback at information level, for example by the
     more efficient provision of brochures and other
     information

2) Feedback at interpersonal level, e.g. opportunities of dialogue and discussion

3) Feedback at instructional level, for example via influence on teaching content

4) Feedback at organizational level, for example via influence on the organization of education.

In the final report summarizing the whole of the project, the experience derived from the various field experiments has been analyzed in relation to these criteria.

Where clarification problems are concerned, it is obvious that the one-sided emphasis of information problems is not enough. Information measures cannot be expected to function properly until the individual is aware of his own aptitudes and circumstances and articulates his own information needs. Considering the composite and highly variegated elements of the individual person's educational planning, there are strong reasons for supposing that counseling needs are relatively great, particularly in the case of people planning or faced with decisive role changes. At the same time as the profounder aspects of clarification (e.g. the penetration of premises and psychological commitments) are an important element of the educational and vocational counseling process, they are also more cumbersome in purely methodological terms. The attempts which have been made to ease the clarification process among presumptive students have not always been successful. (Report 8).

The question of the search for identity is particularly important to older students planning decisive changes in their relationship to family and work through the medium of education. In the transition from a care role to a future vocational role, or in self-initiated changes of occupational role, conflicts of role and identity are frequently accentuated. Ostensibly clearly defined motives for changing jobs or raising one's general educational level can be guided by under lying changes in the role repertoire and identity experience of the individual. There were a number of typical subgroups among the interviewees. One such subgroup, of course, is the woman (mother) in a situation of emancipation in relation to traditional family patterns and a delayed professional career. Another example is provided by economically active men who wish by means of education to improve their occupational situation, or those who are struggling to counteract signs of an ongoing process of relegation from their occupational roles.

Problems of preparation occur in various ways. The enhancement of self-reliance probably plays a very important part as an initial element in the preparation

process, not least in the case of students with limited
previous experience of studying. The role planning of the
individual is another painstaking and time-consuming proc-
ess. The importance of the social and psychological com-
mitments in educational and occupational choices under-
lines the importance of the fact that, for counseling
purposes, the individual cannot be isolated from his so-
cial environment. Experience from the social sector has
indicated the need for a "family therapy" approach (the
idea being that members of a family cannot be individually
influenced, so that work has to be done with the family as
a whole) to be adopted in counseling when elucidating the
relationship of the presumptive student to his family or
to his work.

The great heterogeneity of the student population of today
and tomorrow underlines the need for a dialogue or two-way
contacts between higher education and presumptive students.
Contacts of this kind should be aimed primarily at clarify-
ing possible alternative courses of action by means of
greater information and opportunities of discussion and
analysis. It is also important for the search for knowledge
and the creation of knowledge to be regarded as a constant
process in which the presumptive student can also play an
active part in the shaping of his learning situations. The
problem and project orientation which is being tested to-
day in many contexts within higher studies could be one
way of stimulating this type of influence.

Continued research needed

The project has been mainly formulative in character. Con-
sequently it has been more concerned with problem seeking
and problem definition than with the empirical testing of
particular ideas or hypotheses concerning the nature of in-
formation and counseling problems. Further investigations
are therefore urgently needed in this sector. One problem
for investigation concerns efforts to define criteria for
information and counseling measures. Hitherto evaluations
of study information have placed overmuch emphasis on re-
latively superficial criteria, e.g. whether the recipient
has seen or assimilated the information material concerned.
Less attention has been paid to the social and psychological
contexts in which information is received and is expected
to be used. The concepts of clarification, preparation and
feedback are designed to rectify the one-sided focus of
these criteria on the technics of information.

Another important area is concerned with the role change
often implied by higher studies, seen in the light of social
psychology and developmental psychology. Development is of-
ten initiated in crises or decisive changes in a person's
social and occupational circumstances. But we still do not
know enough about the individual process of change. What is
needed by different groups in order to accomplish role
changes by means of adult education? What are the individual
and social prices of such changes, especially as regards
persons of mature age and in relatively established social

situations? Clearly, questions of adjustment and iden-
tity seeking play a very important part here, but we
are still very limited in our knowledge of the inter-
action between identity seeking and self-image on the
one hand and learning problems and motivation on the
other.

The project has also shown the difficulty of pinning
down the role which information and counseling can
play in facilitating identity seeking and the learning
situation. It has also been hard to establish any
compensatory effects of information and counseling ef-
forts in the case of group which are underprivileged
where higher studies are concerned. Therefore this sec-
tor too is in need, not only of further research but
also, to no less an extent, of various practical ex-
periments involving information and counseling efforts
focussing on specific target groups of varying width.
As long as it remains difficult for the education
system as such to document successful compensatory
measures on behalf of educationally underprivileged
groups, one cannot realistically expect such effects
to stem from isolated experiments in information and
counseling.

Practical experience

To start with the project also functioned as a consul-
tancy project in connection with the current informa-
tion activities of the UKÄ Information Section and lo-
cal information secretariats. In the course of the
project, evaluations were undertaken of study informa-
tion campaigns and efforts were made at various con-
ferences to discuss the further development of informa-
tion activities. Although no systematic evaluation has
been made of these activities, there can be no doubt
that the co-operation was favourably viewed by the in-
formation officers and counselors concerned. Apart from
such spin-off effects, the project has generated a
number of viewpoints concerning the practical side of
information.

Firstly, it is clear that the way in which information
material for presumptive students is designed does a
great deal to influence the practical use to which
that information is put. Efforts to develop auto-diag-
nostic questionnaires revealed that information can be
made more effective if there is a quide or guidance
which not only directs the search for information but
also raises questions having an important bearing on
educational and vocational choice. On the other hand
it seems difficult to evolve a generally applicable
body of material for educational and vocational coun-
seling. The material has to be adapted to learning
conditions, aptitudes for different types of education
and the type of subject content.

Another practical viewpoint concerns the need to inte-

grate centrally initiated information and counseling
measures with the information, counseling and introduc-
tion provided at various universities, colleges and in-
stitutions. The main task of centrally organized infor-
mation and counseling must be to make it easier for pre-
sumptive students of various ages to ask more adequate
questions concerning the possible long-term and short-
term implications of higher studies. This will give
them more opportunity of realistically comparing dif-
ferent alternatives and of ascertaining the prepara-
tions required for their studies. In this way centrally
initiated information activities can be seen as an infor-
mation link between the situation of the presumptive
student and the reality communicated by teachers, coun-
selors and students at institutional level.

One problem in this connection, however, is that central
informers sometimes tend to underestimate or to avoid
broaching the problems and realities which higher studies
really involve. More often than not, centrally initiated
information focusses on the outward framework of studies
and the special admission requirements applying to dif-
ferent courses and subjects. In connection with the re-
form of higher education, it is also obvious that, due
among other things to various campaigns in the mass media,
centrally initiated information has been preoccupied with
drawing attention to higher education opportunities, far
less interest having been devoted to guiding presumptive
students into a pattern of thinking which will help them
to arrive at a clearer appreciation and understanding of
the true implications of higher studies.

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REPORTS

Upwards of twenty reports of varying scope and content
have been produced in the course of the project. Most
of them have been published by the Department of Educa-
tion in the University of Stockholm, but two of them
(nos. 3 and 7) have been published by Studentlitteratur.
The following are the most important.

1. Ohlsson, L B   Information om högre utbildning -
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2. Abrahamsson, K   Försök med studie- och yrkesoriente-
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                       1973. (Experiments in group educa-
                       tional and vocational counseling
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3. Abrahamsson, K   Kom igen Svensson! Om vuxenutbild-
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                       Studentlitteratur AB, Lund. 1974.
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4. Abrahamsson, K   Personalutbildningsdagen – ett för-
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5. Abrahamsson, K   Informations- och vägledningsbehov- hos
                     presumtiva vuxenstuderande på univer-
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Kenneth Abrahamsson
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